

ROUTER TABLE FENCE SYSTEM

REFERENCE TO PROVISIONAL APPLICATION

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This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional application Ser. No. 60/010,975, filed Feb. 1, 1996, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by this reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to router tables and fences for use with router tables.

Because of their versatility, electric routers are very widely used in woodworking, particularly in home and small commercial shops. Such routers use a powerful electric motor in a housing to which handles are attached for holding and manipulating the tool. The motor shaft terminates in a collet adapted to receive the shank of a router bit or cutter, and a base attaches to the housing and surrounds the cutter so that a portion of the cutter may protrude beyond the base, which bears against a workpiece during use of the router. The position of the base is adjustable up and down parallel to the rotating axis of the collet and cutter, and in plunge routers the relative position of the base and router cutter can change during use of the tool in order to "plunge" the cutter into the workpiece. Electric routers are generally intended to be used by moving the router relative to a stationary workpiece, with a portion of the router base bearing against the workpiece.

Substantial additional versatility can be achieved by mounting a router in an inverted position with the router cutter protruding up through an opening in a relatively large, flat work surface to provide, in effect, a shaper. With this arrangement, a workpiece lying on top of the work surface can be manipulated relative to the stationary router and a rotating router cutter, the position of which does not move relative to the workpiece. Such router tables are commercially available in a variety of configurations, and numerous plans for homemade router tables are also available.

Many commercially available router tables are provided with fences, and fences for both commercial and homemade router tables are frequently made by users by clamping or otherwise fixing a length of wood to the router table top. Because most router table operations using a fence require that only a portion of the router cutter protrude beyond the face of the fence, provision typically needs to be made for locating the fence at least partly around the cutter. This is sometimes accomplished by machining a slot or recess in the fence within which a portion of the cutter is positioned.

Such shop-made fences, and many of the commercially manufactured fences, suffer from a variety of deficiencies. For instance, many are difficult to position, reposition or adjust accurately. Some have insufficient strength to resist deformation during use, and many do not easily accommodate chip and dust removal accessories. It is very typically desirable to use work hold-down and safety shield accessories with router table fences, and many fences accept attachment of such accessories only with difficulty, if at all.

It is thus among the objects of the present invention to provide a router table fence that is straight, rigid, easily adjusted and which accommodates good chip escape.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a router table fence that can be easily used in jointing a work surface.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a router table fence that will easily accommodate a wide variety of additional shop-made and commercially available accessories.

These and other objects of the present invention will become apparent from the following description of the invention, the accompanying drawings and the claims.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The router table fence of the present invention uses three nesting extrusions or spars, two of which lie under a longer third spar. By positioning the inner ends of the two lower spars adjacent to a router cutter protruding through a router table, it is possible to provide a fence, particularly when the lower spars are used with wood facings, that can be adjusted to closely surround the cutter. Lateral movement of the fence assembly adjusts the amount of cutter that contacts a work piece manipulated past the cutter while contacting the fence.

The cross sectional shapes of the spars are typically identical and are generally square, with structure that permits the upper, longer spar to rest on top of, and be attached in a manner permitting it to slide against, the lower two spars. Tee-shaped slots in each face of the spars accept fasteners that connect the spars together. Such tee-shaped slots also accept fasteners for a variety of accessories, such as hold-down devices and shields. Fence locks attach the fence to a variety of router table tops without the need for fence-receiving structures separately attached to the router table or table top. The fence locks of the present invention can be used for many top thicknesses but work particularly well with thin tops.

A micro-adjust stop can be used in cooperation with the fence locks to make very accurate and predictable adjustments in the position of the fence on a router table top.

Wood sub-fences attached to the lower fence spars can be cut by a router cutter to fit very closely around the profile of the cutter to facilitate chip removal and to reduce tear-out in the work piece. By using a shim behind one of the sub-fences in order to position it parallel to, but slightly offset from, the other sub-fence, it is possible to joint a surface of a board using a "straight" cutter.

Among the shields easily attached to the fence of the present invention is one that can be formed from a single sheet of suitable plastic like polycarbonate or acrylic with a 90° bend joining a semicircular (horizontal) portion that lies above the router cutter in use to a rectangular (vertical) portion with two screw-receiving vertical slots for receiving screws that are threaded into nuts within one of the fence tee-shaped slots to mount the shield where needed. The shield can be mounted directly against the fence when the cutter being shielded is in that location. In other instances, particularly where wood sub-fences are used, longer screws can pass through the shield and then through stand-offs that position the shield at a desirable location (above the router cutter) away from the fence.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the front and left end of the router table fence of the present invention, shown positioned on a router table top.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the rear and right end of the router table fence of the present invention, also shown positioned on a router table top together with the micro-adjust fence positioning stop of the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the fence of the present invention shown on a router table top and with two fixed stops and the dust chute of the present invention; FIG. 3A is a top plan view similar to FIG. 3 illustrating use of the micro-adjust fence positioning stop; and FIG. 3B is a

fragmentary, enlarged view of the fence of the present invention in the vicinity of the router cutter.

FIG. 4 is an elevation view of the right end of the router table fence of the present invention together on a router table top with the micro-adjust fence stop of the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the micro-adjust fence stop shown in FIG. 4.

FIG. 6 is a rear elevation view of a fixed fence stop of the present invention shown on a router table top edge fragment together with a fragment of the fence.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a portion of the face of the fence of the present invention showing a fence-mounted safety shield mounted directly to the fence.

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a portion of the face of the fence of the present invention with wood sub-fences mounted in place and the safety shield shown in FIG. 7 shown positioned away from the fence with spacers.

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of a portion of the face and top of the fence of the present invention shown with a work hold-down mounted thereon.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The router table fence system 10 of the present invention is illustrated in front and rear perspective views in FIGS. 1 and 2, respectively. The system 10 includes a fence 12, micro-adjust stop 14, fixed stop 16, and dust chute 18. The figures illustrate use of the system on a relatively thin router table top 42 that is typically steel.

A safety shield 100 is shown mounted directly to the fence 12 in FIG. 7 and spaced away from fence 12 in FIG. 8. A hold-down assembly 120 is illustrated mounted on fence 12 in FIG. 9.

As is illustrated in FIGS. 1, 2 and 4, fence 12 includes an extruded aluminum upper spar 20, extruded aluminum lower spars 22 and 24, two fence locks 26, sub-fences 28 and 30, and jointing spacers 33.

As will be appreciated by reference to FIG. 4, the cross-sectional shapes of upper spar 20 and lower spar 22 are identical. Each spar 20 and 22 is generally a rectangle in cross-section, having four sides, opposed pairs of which are equal. As illustrated in the figures all sides of the cross-sectional shape of the spars 20 and 22 may be substantially equal, resulting in a square cross-section. A longitudinal T-slot is centered in each of the four faces of the spar. Each spar 20 and 24 also has two upstanding ribs 34. Upstanding ribs 34 on the top of the lower spars 22 and 24 that are received in longitudinal slots or depressions 36 in the bottom of upper spar 20, so that lower spars 22 and 24 may slide longitudinally relative to each other while maintaining vertical alignment with upper spar 20.

Screws 38 having a long rod-shaped head connect the upper spar 20 to lower spars 22 and 24 by passing through spar 20 and into nuts 39 located in the upper T-slot 32 in spars 22 and 24.

Plastic end caps (not shown) on the ends of the spars prevent T-nuts from falling out of T-slots 32 and seal the lower spars 22 and 24 to improve dust removal.

As will be appreciated by reference to the figures, particularly FIG. 2, the ability of lower spars 22 and 24 to move toward or away from each other permits upper spar 20 and lower spars 22 and 24 to be positioned in a variety of desirable locations relative to a router cutter 40, including locations where a portion of the cutter 40 is surrounded by the fence 12.

Fence 12 is locked in position on a router table top 42 by fence locks 26 that have a cross-sectional shape permitting

a head 44 of fence lock 26 to be received in a T-slot 32 on the bottom of one of lower spars 22 or 24. A foot 46 of fence lock 26 protrudes under router table top 42 and carries a threaded rod 48, preferably brass, to which a gyratory handle 49 is attached in order to rotate threaded rod 48 in order to press its tip 51 against the underside of table top 42.

Fixed stops 16 may be used to establish the position of fence 12 in order to make it possible to remove fence 12 and later return it to exactly the same position. Each fixed stop 16 is essentially a section of round rod 50 penetrated by a slot 52 that fits around an edge of router table top 42. An axial threaded hole receives a screw 54 with a knurled head 56.

Accurate adjustment of the position of fence 12 may be accomplished with the assistance of micro-adjust stop 14, which is shown in side elevation and top plan views in FIGS. 4 and 5, respectively. In order to accomplish such adjustment, one end of fence 12 is fixed in position by locking the associated fence lock 26, and the other end of the fence is located in approximately the desired position. Micro-adjust stop 14 is then positioned on the edge of table top 42 with micro-adjust stop screw 58 end 60 in contact with the rear face 62 of fence 12.

Micro-adjust stop 14 includes a stop body 64 that is locked in position on an edge of router table top 42 with knurled head screw 66. Body 64 is penetrated by screw 58, preferably brass, that has a conical or round end 60 for contact with face 62 of the fence and, on the other end, a knurled knob 68 a barrel 70 marked with a ring 72 to establish lateral position and rotational position marks 74. A reference cursor 78 that may be a piece of acrylic or other clear plastic extends from body 64 over barrel 70. Cursor 78 has a longitudinal mark 80 and hash marks 82 transverse to longitudinal mark 80 which are separated from each other by 0.100 inches.

The thread on screw 58 is a double-start, twenty turns per inch thread, so that one complete revolution of screw 58 advances it by 0.100 inches. With the remote end of the fence 12 clamped in position, the center point of the fence (adjacent to the router cutter 40) will move 0.050 inches when the micro-adjust screw 58 is rotated one revolution and therefore moves by 0.100 inches the face 62 of fence 12 against which screw 58 end 60 bears. Barrel 70 is not threaded into screw 58 but rather can rotate or "float" on screw 58. Barrel 70 is held in position by a bent washer 71 between the barrel 70 and knurled head 68 and by a knurled nut 65. This permits barrel 70 to be rotated in order to "zero" it after contact with fence surface 62 is established. Each full rotation of screw may be read from the barrel 70 and cursor 78 markings as 0.050 inches of movement of the fence relative to cutter 40 at cutter 40.

Wood sub-fences 28 and 30 are typically used with fence 12 by fixing them to the appropriate face of each of lower spars 20 and 22. By sliding the sub-fences 28 and 30 toward cutter 40, when cutter 40 is rotating, the cutter 40 will cut the ends of sub-fences 28 and 30 so that a "zero-clearance" relationship is established between the cutter and sub-fences 28 and 30. This reduces workpiece 90 tear-out, and also facilitates dust ejection by causing most of the material removed from workpiece 90 be ejected between the opposed ends of lower spars 20 and 22.

Such dust may be gathered with dust chute 18, which includes a generally rectangular housing 84 that may be conveniently positioned on ferrous metal router table top 42 with powerful rare earth (such as neodymium-iron-boron) magnets located on the bottom 86 of housing 84. Housing 84